

## Sections of ESSB5396 Creating the Farmland Preservation Program

**Sec. 1** RCW 79A.15.010 and 1990 1st ex.s. c 14 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

The definitions set forth in this section apply throughout this chapter.

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(4) "Farmlands" means any land defined as "farm and agricultural land" in RCW 84.34.020(2).

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**NEW SECTION.** **Sec. 7** A new section is added to chapter 79A.15 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The farmlands preservation account is established in the state treasury. The committee will administer the account in accordance with chapter 79A.25 RCW and this chapter, and hold it separate and apart from all other money, funds, and accounts of the committee. Moneys appropriated for this chapter to the farmlands preservation account must be distributed for the acquisition and preservation of farmlands in order to maintain the opportunity for agricultural activity upon these lands.

(2)(a) Moneys appropriated for this chapter to the farmlands preservation account may be distributed for (i) the fee simple or less than fee simple acquisition of farmlands; (ii) the enhancement or restoration of ecological functions on those properties; or (iii) both. In order for a farmland preservation grant to provide for an environmental enhancement or restoration project, the project must include the acquisition of a real property interest.

(b) If a city or county acquires a property through this program in fee simple, the city or county shall endeavor to secure preservation of the property through placing a conservation easement, or other form of deed restriction, on the property which dedicates the land to agricultural use and retains one or more property rights in perpetuity. Once an easement or other form of deed restriction is placed on the property, the city or county shall seek to sell the property, at fair market value, to a person or persons who will maintain the property in agricultural production. Any moneys from the sale of the property shall either be used to purchase interests in additional properties which meet the criteria in subsection (9) of this section, or to repay the grant from the state which was originally used to purchase the property.

(3) Cities and counties may apply for acquisition and enhancement or restoration funds for farmland preservation projects within their jurisdictions under subsection (1) of this section.

(4) The committee may adopt rules establishing acquisition and enhancement or restoration policies and priorities for distributions from the farmlands preservation account.

(5) The acquisition of a property right in a project under this section by a county or city does not provide a right of access to the property by the public unless explicitly provided for in a conservation easement or other form of deed restriction.

(6) Except as provided in RCW 79A.15.030(7), moneys appropriated for this section may not be used by the committee to fund staff positions or other overhead expenses, or by a city or county to fund operation or maintenance of areas acquired under this chapter.

(7) Moneys appropriated for this section may be used by grant recipients for costs incidental to restoration and acquisition, including, but not limited to, surveying expenses, fencing, and signing.

(8) The committee may not approve a local project where the local agency's share is less than the amount to be awarded from the farmlands preservation account. In-kind contributions, including contributions of a real property interest in land, may be used to satisfy the local agency's share.

(9) In determining the acquisition priorities, the committee must consider, at a minimum, the following criteria:

- (a) Community support for the project;
- (b) A recommendation as part of a limiting factors or critical pathways analysis, a watershed plan or habitat conservation plan, or a coordinated regionwide prioritization effort;
- (c) The likelihood of the conversion of the site to nonagricultural or more highly developed usage;
- (d) Consistency with a local land use plan, or a regional or statewide recreational or resource plan. The projects that assist in the implementation of local shoreline master plans updated according to RCW 90.58.080 or local comprehensive plans updated according to RCW 36.70A.130 must be highly considered in the process;
- (e) Benefits to salmonids;
- (f) Benefits to other fish and wildlife habitat;
- (g) Integration with recovery efforts for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species;
- (h) The viability of the site for continued agricultural production, including, but not limited to:
  - (i) Soil types;
  - (ii) On-site production and support facilities such as barns, irrigation systems, crop processing and storage facilities, wells, housing, livestock sheds, and other farming infrastructure;
  - (iii) Suitability for producing different types or varieties of crops;

- (iv) Farm-to-market access;
  - (v) Water availability; and
  - (i) Other community values provided by the property when used as agricultural land, including, but not limited to:
    - (i) Viewshed;
    - (ii) Aquifer recharge;
    - (iii) Occasional or periodic collector for storm water runoff;
    - (iv) Agricultural sector job creation;
    - (v) Migratory bird habitat and forage area; and
    - (vi) Educational and curriculum potential.
  - (10) In allotting funds for environmental enhancement or restoration projects, the committee will require the projects to meet the following criteria:
    - (a) Enhancement or restoration projects must further the ecological functions of the farmlands;
    - (b) The projects, such as fencing, bridging watercourses, replanting native vegetation, replacing culverts, clearing of waterways, etc., must be less than fifty percent of the acquisition cost of the project including any in-kind contribution by any party;
    - (c) The projects should be based on accepted methods of achieving beneficial enhancement or restoration results; and
    - (d) The projects should enhance the viability of the preserved farmland to provide agricultural production while conforming to any legal requirements for habitat protection.
  - (11) Before November 1st of each even-numbered year, the committee will recommend to the governor a prioritized list of all projects to be funded under this section. The governor may remove projects from the list recommended by the committee and must submit this amended list in the capital budget request to the legislature. The list must include, but not be limited to, a description of each project and any particular match requirement.
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Note: The full text of ESSB5396 can be found on the Legislature's web site at:  
<http://www.leg.wa.gov/pub/billinfo/2005-06/Pdf/Bills/Senate Passed Legislature/5396-S.PL.pdf>